Meeting of Mr. Segal's Group - May 2, 1962

M-306

I hope you don't mind that we have this instrument. After a little while you won't even notice it is there. It might help you in your notes if you want to keep them. But you understand the main reason is I want to, that Mr. and Mrs. Segal, when they come back, that they know what we have talked about. And I surely want to avoid having any kind of misinterpretation about it because we will talk about work, and of course you will realize that sometimes the interpretation, and also the explanation or formulations of work by different people may give rise to either misunderstanding, or at least it might be a little confusing. And I don't want to confuse you at all, and at the same time you cannot expect me to talk the language of someone else. So it is fortunate we want to agree on certain fundamental things regarding work, and I hope we can agree on it. But we'll find out as we go along dependent on your questions, and dependent on the kind of answers that I hope to give, or maybe can help in formulating, so that I may be useful, and that if there is any misunderstanding, that you will be outspoken enough to tell exactly in what respect you differ or what is not clear when I make certain statements that you do not understand.

So it is not a question if you want to ask any questions, will I disagree. It is not a question of disagreeing. You must not hesitate to explain that you don't understand what I say and that you have your own opinion about it maybe, and you must be quite free to talk about that. Because only on that basis will we be able to understand each other, and on that basis maybe we can come to some conclusions that we all agree on.

How did they, how do they usually conduct a group? They invite questions and then that is the way they begin, or do they make a statement in the beginning, and

then in accordance with that some questions, or how does it work?

Someone in the group: Well, there isn't, I don't think, any fixed way. Sometimes they wait and people begin to talk about things. On occasion we've had readings. But on the whole, I would say, it is a question of waiting for people to bring any observations about the work that they have done, and questions that arise.

Mr. Nyland: Good. Then let's do it the same way. So then questions are invited.

Same person: Only may I say, last week Mr. Segal spoke at length about the law of seven, and advised perhaps that people might really —?—, and if I understood him correctly, to try in the light of that to see how it could apply in their own lives. And he also gave us a specific task for the week, and that was to do perhaps five minutes of intentional thinking at a specified time or times.

Mr. Nyland: Well, we can pick it up from that point if you like, huh? So anyone who wants to talk about that, about the exercise, about the law of seven, about this so-called intensive thinking and whatever the purpose may be or the results are that you have obtained, or the kind of experience you want to talk about, let's talk.

Question: I've seen a certain pattern in my own work regarding this intentional thinking. When I find myself in an obstacle to work, what usually happens is that when I find I can't work on a specific thing, rather than admit to my not working, I find that I intellectualize about it or dream about it. But something watches at times, and even if only this persists, what seems to happen is that there may come a moment of conscience. I call it that because it seems to be closest to what happens according to the definition of the work. And if at that moment something is more alive, it can act as the shock, and I find that something can work on this obstacle or at least see what it is perhaps. But this happens accidentally. When I

try for myself with some intention to think concerning an obstacle, perhaps I find that I never come to a moment of this intensity. It seems to happen accidentally. Could you say something about that?

Mr. Nyland: Well, we have to learn how to understand each other, don't we? We have to make sure that when you use a word like, let's say, like 'work', that I understand the same thing. Otherwise we talk at cross purposes. So in order to get it more clear, I would like you to say when do you work. How do you work? What do you understand by work on yourself? What does it mean?

Question: It is difficult to say very briefly.

Mr. Nyland: Well, a general indication, what it is, what is involved? You see, I believe very much in being quite clear about it. When I talk about work, something in me wants to work. When I talk about something in me that recognizes certain conditions and certain states, also something has to be quite clearly defined what it is that sees this. You see, otherwise when I say, "What is an obstacle?", what is this obstacle which is in the way to work? Where does that come from? What kind of obstacle is it? If I see it as an obstacle, what sees it as an obstacle? An obstacle for what? I say I cannot get it out of the way, of that obstacle. It is in my way, in my way towards what? So all of that centers around the particular thing that says, "I want to work." All right, what is work for me? What do I understand by it? How do I understand it? What is meant? You said, "to work on myself." What is it?

Question: To try to define it in this way, I would say, I would have to say that most of my work is a matter of mitering? perhaps my attention so that work on another level may be utilizing this attention. But when I speak this fluidly? about my work, it is usually a matter of finding the key before trying to capture my attention.

Mr. Nyland: Well, of course it has to do with attention. But what is the aim?

Question: It's quite difficult. I can say that. -I couldn't say -.

Mr. Nyland: What is the aim?

Question: My aim is always to be more than I am at the moment I find myself.

Mr. Nyland: In what respect more? For instance if I am a doctor and I have a desire to become a surgeon, and I study and I perfect myself, finally I become a surgeon who really can conduct an operation exactly right. So people will say; I have a name; people will come; they will trust me, and I'm a good surgeon. He is more than what he was, let's say, five years before. Is he more conscious?

Question: I think it has very little to do with consciousness. It may have a great deal to do - it seems that -.

Mr. Nyland: Do you think he is more conscious?

Question: It has something to do with being a better surgeon.

Mr. Nyland: That is right. So when you say 'more' for yourself, in what respect more?

Question: I've tasted a little the difference between being asleep and being awake.

Mr. Nyland: Good. Now we have a terminology we can understand. If I say I want to be more, that means I want to wake up. But it is not 'more', it is really I want to be different. 'More' means an extension of that what I am already extended in a certain direction so that it becomes more. The difference between sleep and awake is a different level. Take ordinary sleep and waking up. Waking up is not more sleep, ordinary sleep. It is a different sleep. I even cannot compare it because in itself it has a different kind of a quality which is in a waking state and is not in a sleeping state. So when I in our terminology of work talk about 'to be asleep', daily activity, and I'm asleep to that, I say 'unconscious', and I compare it to a state of being awake in which I am so-called 'conscious', there is a difference there as if between day and night. So I cannot use the word 'more'. I can only say, "I would

like to change," if you wish, 'evolve'. If you also want to say, "I want to reach a different kind of level," in that sense 'more', but not more of the same kind. But more of a different kind, of a different kind of quality.

So when we talk about work, we all the time must talk about the aim that we have, that is, to be more awake. And when I say now, 'more awake', it would almost assume that I'm a little bit awake, and I'm not. I'm all the time completely asleep, and only when I make the certain attempt to wake up, I make an effort to wake up and I'm concentrated in that way on the effort to wake up.

Now how do you understand that? How do you understand 'to wake up', to make an effort, that what Gurdjieff calls 'Partdolgduty'? That kind of obligation in which I reach a state of being aware of myself? How do I define that? How do I know when I'm more awake, when I'm not asleep? What is there in a state of being aware that is its characteristic which is not a characteristic of my sleeping state? I'm talking about different levels, you see; I'm not talking about extensions. I'm talking about the possibility of, you might say, even leaving earth if the aim is that I would like to reach a higher level of consciousness. And it is as if I would like to leave earth, away from earth, reaching a point which I consider higher in the scale of evolution for myself becoming such, that kind of a person who is then free from the bondage of earth, and is living in accordance with a certain level which is at least a little bit more free. If earth represents for me a certain number of laws of forty-eight or perhaps ninety-six, and I aspire to live on a level where there are only twenty-four laws, it's quite a different thing. I have to introduce something in my life which I call an effort to wake up which is entirely different from that the way I now live. And I live now in my ordinary life an entire subjective life. And the introduction that I must make when I make an effort is to introduce something that now I understand, I hope to understand, as objectivity. You see it is that kind of a world we want to talk about. Because I'm not interested in the con-

tinuation of being a better man on earth. Why should I? As far as earth is concerned, when I'm a better or a good man, I will die anyhow. The whole question comes down to this: if earth is for me an opportunity to live, then do I use my life in such a way that perhaps I could continue to live even after I die? It is one reason perhaps for wanting to work.

Or you can say it another way: if I live in this life and I find that I am bound by so many different kind of laws, like my habits, or that I say I realize I am mechanical, I'm the kind of a person who is constantly asleep, who is unconscious, and I wish to reach a state in which I could become conscious; I have to make an effort, I have to do work on myself. How do I understand that now? That, what is meant by that word? You see, it is not thinking about it. It's the introduction of something quite different. To be aware is not a thought. To be aware is an experience of a certain awakeness. But it is not my functioning as I know it. To be aware cannot be defined in any terms of thinking or feeling or doing. To be aware means being. And being is not subject to these ordinary things of what I call my ordinary functions of any one of the three centers. You understand what I mean? You see what I mean?

Question: I find for myself that it's always thinking about the making an effort prevents me.

Mr. Nyland: That's right.

Question: From waking up.

Mr. Nyland: That's right.

Question: I can't come directly to it.

Mr. Nyland: Good. Why not?

Question: Well, that's what my question was.

Mr. Nyland: Ah, but this is the point first. Now we are clear what you want. You have to get away from your thinking first, isn't that it?

Question: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: Because if your thinking prevents it, then I don't want to think. What is it when I say, "I am"? When I say very simply, "I exist"? When I say, "I have a body"? You sit, you sit in a chair. It is now as if, - in reality it is not that way - it is as if someone or some "I" is up in the ceiling and looks at you, and makes a statement: "he, it sits." Can you make that statement about yourself?

Question: I am sitting.

Mr. Nyland: Good. Are you identified with the way you sit?

Question: Not at the moment.

Mr. Nyland: Good, I am sitting. I make a statement about myself that I sit regardless of how I sit. I am present to my sitting. Something in me becomes aware of me, another part of me, sitting. Right? So far I have two things: I see myself, and I'm not identified with myself. That is, when I say 'I see myself', I try to become impartial. And I will accept that what I am as I am. Now the third, which is also necessary, at what time does it take place?

Question: I don't understand what you mean?

Mr. Nyland: Time is subject to a motion which is first future, then present, and then past. If I think, I may reminisce, memory; or I may anticipate, future. Do I ever think when I am present? You understand the concept of simultaneity?

Question: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: To become aware at the moment when I am. I sit. Even if I try now to say that I sit, I already describe a state which has passed, and as soon as I'm in the past it is a thought process. So the realization of my existence depends on the realization of a moment of my existence. Each moment then immediately goes into the past. But my awareness has to be linked up with the fact that I become aware of my existence as an experience, and then that experience is registered in me as being.

So now here we have the plan. I find myself at certain times sitting, walking, doing certain things, having a body, which body has functions, sometimes physical

functions expressing different forms of behavior. Or it has something that I call a feeling center. It can feel, more or less. It can think, more or less - not much, but in any event there is some mental process that goes on. I call it thinking. At least it is the use of that kind of material stuff that is there, I call brains. It is me. Now this what is me I want to see. How objective can I now be towards myself? It's fairly easy when I sit. It's not so easy when I get up. I lose this sense of bring aware. Still if I get up, as I get up, I hold on to it, I walk to the door, I hope that I can still remain aware. But usually when I'm in front of the door and I start opening the door, I lose myself in this movement. You understand? Take ordinary life: how often do you really see yourself this way? When I say 'see', that means to become aware of oneself in any kind of activity I am, and still assuming I'm by myself. I'm not in the presence of other people. So I make the conditions as good as I can make them without too much disturbance, in a quiet atmosphere, let's say. I exclude, if I can, all kinds of noises. I can even close my eyes to exclude all kinds of things that otherwise would enter into my head and will demand some form of attention. I am now as I sit quiet, close my eyes, I'm aware. I will get up; can I hold on to that what I call my awareness? Or does it go into a thought or a feeling process? So now whatever you describe as an experience has to have an aim of being awake. Otherwise the experience is just like any kind of an experience in ordinary life. And anything that I do very well, anything that I do with kindness, anything where people start to admire me, anything I do in order to please someone, all of that does not guarantee that I was awake. I can only be awake when I make an attempt of waking up.

Now, go over the day. How often were you in this sense, or, if you were not, how often did you make an attempt? You say when you make an attempt to awake, you think about it. What did you do about it? You find yourself thinking about it. You

know it isn't work. Do you stop it? Do you substitute something else?

Question: What's happened is that I've seen myself being consumed by these turning thoughts so often that I give in more easily than I did before.

Mr. Nyland: Good. But what will you do, let's say, from now on?

Question: I hope I can keep this.

Mr. Nyland: Yes, you don't want to be consumed by such thoughts, do you?

Question: No.

Mr. Nyland: There is a point at which you say, "No, it's enough." With other words, you make up your mind in order to try to work. You make up your mind that you will say, "Now I try, whatever I will do, I will try to be awake in doing that." It is not that I will stop what I will do, but I myself will be in a different state of being awake while I do this. It is obvious I cannot do it if things engage me so completely where it is like an avalanche and I'm simply bowled over, snowed under. I haven't got that kind of an attention for it. I cannot do it. But I can do it with very simple things. For instance, I sit, I relax. Do you know what sensing is?

Question: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: Have you tried it?

Question: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: Good. Do you wake up when you sense?

Question: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: You're not critical about that what you find as yourself? Are you attached to yourself?

Question: --- I am tense — It depends how I find myself.

Mr. Nyland: But the question is when you sense -

Question: I'm more free.

Mr. Nyland: Good. When you sense, do you do it regularly in the morning?

Question: Yes.